

50 Barn Owl Facts

Ages 9 to 11 · Fun facts about barn owls



What They Look Like

- 1 Barn owls have a white, heart-shaped face.
- 2 Barn owls are white underneath, with golden-brown backs and wings.
- 3 Female barn owls are usually a little bigger and darker than males, with more spots.
- 4 A barn owl weighs only about 250 to 350 grams, less than a tin of baked beans!
- 5 With its wings spread out, a barn owl measures about 80 to 95 centimetres across. That's about three times as long as this sheet of paper!

Super Senses

- 6 Barn owls fly so quietly that you can't hear them coming.
- 7 A barn owl can hear a tiny vole moving under the grass.
- 8 One of a barn owl's ears is higher than the other. This helps it work out exactly where a sound is coming from.
- 9 Barn owls can't move their eyes, so they turn their heads instead, up to about 270 degrees.
- 10 A barn owl's heart-shaped face works like a satellite dish, collecting sounds and sending them to its ears.
- 11 Barn owls can catch food in total darkness, using their hearing alone.
- 12 Soft, fluffy feathers with comb-like edges let barn owls fly almost silently.

50 Barn Owl Facts (continued)



Hunting & Food

- 13 Barn owls mostly hunt at night.
- 14 Their favourite food is the field vole, a small furry animal like a mouse.
- 15 Barn owls swallow their food whole!
- 16 Barn owls catch their food with their feet, using sharp, curved claws.
- 17 A barn owl eats around three to five small animals every night.
- 18 Barn owls fly slowly back and forth over fields, close to the ground. This is called quartering.
- 19 A barn owl often hovers in the air before dropping onto its food, feet first.
- 20 A barn owl's sharp, curved claws are called talons.
- 21 A barn owl's outer toe can turn backwards, giving it a better grip.
- 22 As well as voles, barn owls eat shrews, mice and sometimes young rats and small birds.

Owl Pellets

- 23 Barn owls cough up the fur and bones they can't digest. These are called pellets.
- 24 A barn owl usually coughs up one or two pellets a day.
- 25 Scientists and schoolchildren take pellets apart to find tiny bones and see what the owl has eaten.
- 26 Fresh pellets are black and shiny. Old ones turn grey.

50 Barn Owl Facts (continued)



Eggs & Owlets

- 27 Baby barn owls are called owlets.
- 28 A barn owl usually lays four to six white eggs.
- 29 Young owlets are covered in fluffy white down.
- 30 Barn owls don't build nests. They lay their eggs on the bare floor or on old pellets.
- 31 The female sits on the eggs to keep them warm, and the male brings her food.
- 32 Barn owl eggs take about a month to hatch.
- 33 The eggs are laid a few days apart, so the owlets hatch at different times and are all different sizes.
- 34 Hungry owlets make a loud hissing, snoring noise to beg for food.
- 35 Young barn owls take their first flights when they're about 8 to 10 weeks old.

Daily Life

- 36 Barn owls screech. They don't hoot! It's tawny owls that hoot.
- 37 Barn owls live in old barns, hollow trees and nest boxes.
- 38 Barn owl feathers aren't waterproof, so they don't like hunting in the rain.
- 39 Barn owls usually stay with the same partner for life.
- 40 In spring, a male barn owl brings food to the female as a present.

50 Barn Owl Facts (continued)



- 41 Barn owls spend the day resting in a quiet, dry place called a roost.
- 42 Barn owls love rough, tussocky grassland, where lots of voles live.
- 43 Snowy winters are hard for barn owls, because voles hide in tunnels under the snow.

Barn Owls & People

- 44 Barn owls are protected by law in the UK, so their nests must never be disturbed.
- 45 Busy roads are dangerous for barn owls, which often hunt along grassy roadsides.
- 46 Barn owls have lots of nicknames, including ghost owl, church owl, white owl and screech owl.
- 47 Farmers like barn owls because they eat lots of mice and rats.

Around the World

- 48 Barn owls live on every continent except Antarctica.
- 49 The barn owl's scientific name is *Tyto alba*. Alba means white.
- 50 Barn owls don't migrate. British barn owls stay in the same area all year round.